

Vanessa Jones



\$5,000 WINNER **Walmart Supercenter #593** **Douglas, GA**

In 2020, I left my job with Walmart to take care of my father who had congestive heart failure. He passed away, and a year later, my mom died of COVID-related issues. It was overwhelming. I was an only child and I felt like they'd left me. I was so sad. My coping mechanism was eating. I was a late night snacker — I'd have cookies, candies, and chips. I'm back at Walmart now, but I've been feeling stressed. I'm 50 and my husband, Lakavius, and I have three children: Ruby who's 21, Myla who's 19, and 10-year-old Lovely. My left knee was hurting a lot, I had high blood pressure, I was borderline diabetic, and I weighed 280 pounds. My self-esteem was very low and I didn't like looking in the mirror.

My co-worker, Elizabeth Jowers inspired me to start the Thrive Challenge.

I started by backing away from sugary drinks and snacks. If I'm craving something sweet I'll have sugar-free jello pudding with peanut butter and oat milk. I've learned so much from Thrive. Every time I feel like having a snack, I drink some water and hydrate, and that stops the cravings.

I stopped eating fried food.

I'll make chicken breast stuffed with spinach, garlic and cream cheese and cooked in the skillet — I love it! Or we'll have baked salmon with asparagus. I'm using cauliflower rice instead of regular rice. I thought I wouldn't like it, but it's really good if you add salt and seasoning. I'll jazz up a salad by adding ham, turkey or tofu.

I'm doing intermittent fasting and I have more energy.

We're having family dinners and 6 o'clock is our shut-off time for eating. The weight dropped off and I've lost 40 pounds.

Every morning, I walk our Chihuahua, Ice Cream, and I walk 10 thousand steps at work.

On the weekend, I walk with the kids; Lovely rides her bicycle and carries my water bottle in her basket. They all encourage me. They say, "Come on Mom, we're almost there."

The kids are my inspiration.

They talked me into buying a two piece black and white bathing suit. We're going on a cruise to the Bahamas in October, and I want to feel good wearing it.

I work out at the gym with a personal trainer.

She's very encouraging and she's given me exercises to do at home.

The other day, I went to Lovely's fourth grade graduation and I felt wonderful.

I put on a new, green, earth toned dress and I can't even tell you how excited I was. I loved the way I looked, and I loved the compliments. Lakavius said "You look good!"



Lakavius and I are going out to the movies and to dinner.

When we go to a restaurant, I know how to order now. I might have grilled shrimp with veggies and salad — without the garlic bread.

I've learned to meditate and it helps to alleviate my stress.

I love the Thrive Reset with mountains and the box breathing exercise, where you inhale, hold your breath, then exhale. Every day Lovely says, "Mommy did you do your breathing?"

Since I've lost weight, my knee feels much better.

Also, my doctor's very happy because I'm no longer pre-diabetic and he's reduced my blood pressure medication.

My daughters gave me a gift certificate for a massage

It was for all the accomplishments I've achieved. I've never felt comfortable before lying on a massage table, so it was a first for me. It was amazing, a breath of fresh air — a real reset.

I'm enjoying my job.

I work in the deli and I get a lot of joy when people tell me they love my rotisserie chicken, and that the sides look so fresh. I cook like I do at home.

Some customers share what they're going through.

I really listen because often I've walked in their shoes. I've been encouraging one woman who's taking care of her parents, like I did, and I've been telling her about some of the techniques I've learned. We've become friends. And she always tells me I'm a blessing.

Healing from grief isn't an overnight process but it's getting better.

I'd drifted into a dark place, but I know my parents are in a better place. The Thrive Challenge is helping me reset and cope. It's an eye opener and I learn something new every day.

